Educational Stability: Keeping Foster Youth in School

WACAP Conference
October 2023

Image by Gábor Adonyi from Pixabay

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Please write down three things that are personally important to you.

Examples include people, relationships, possessions, religion/faith, achievements, etc.
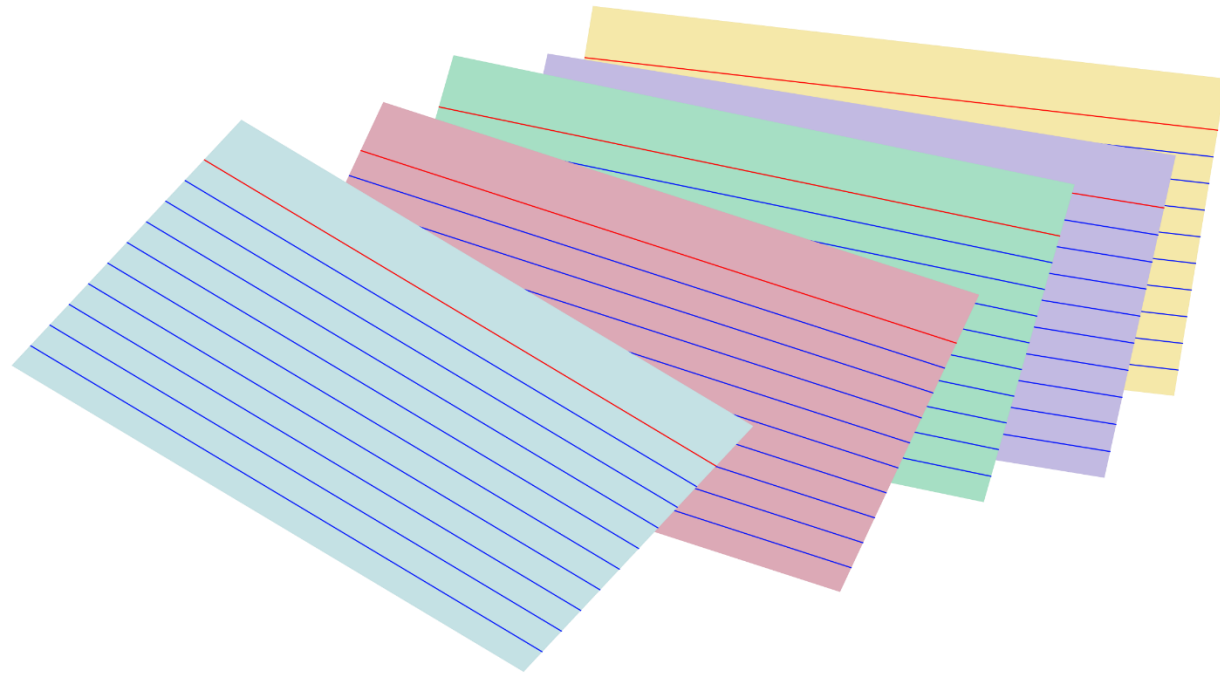
For your eyes only! You will NOT be asked to share.

Stacey Klim
Foster Care Program Supervisor
Office of Superintendent of Public
Instruction (OSPI)

Peggy Carlson
Education Program Administrator
Department of Children, Youth,
and Families (DCYF)

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Agenda

Overview of Students and their Data
Impact of School Changes
What does the law say?
DCYF State Structure
Break
Activity
Video
Framework of Support
Working with School Districts
Treehouse
Questions

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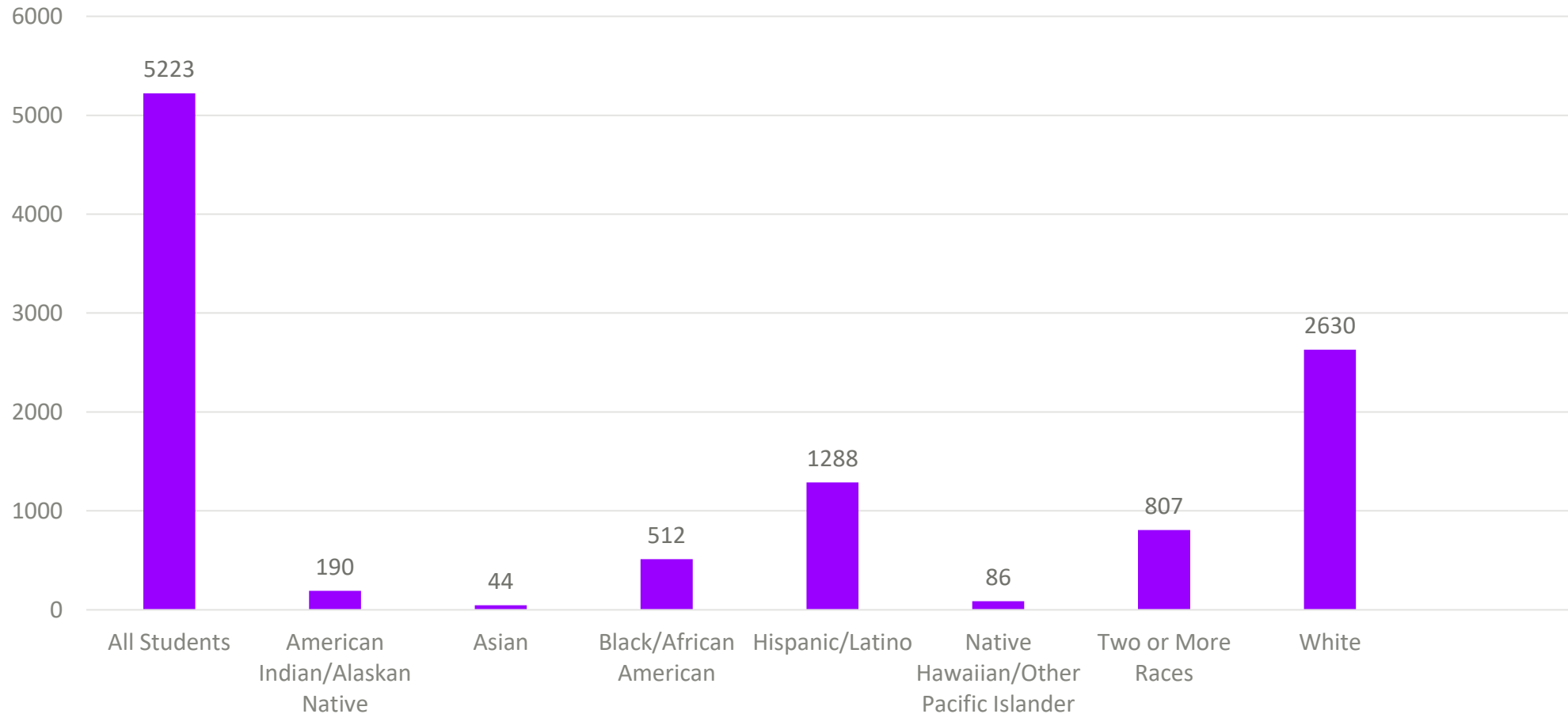
Students Who Qualify as Foster Care

Students who are the "subject of a dependency proceeding":

- Foster Home
- Residential Facility
- Relative
- Group Home
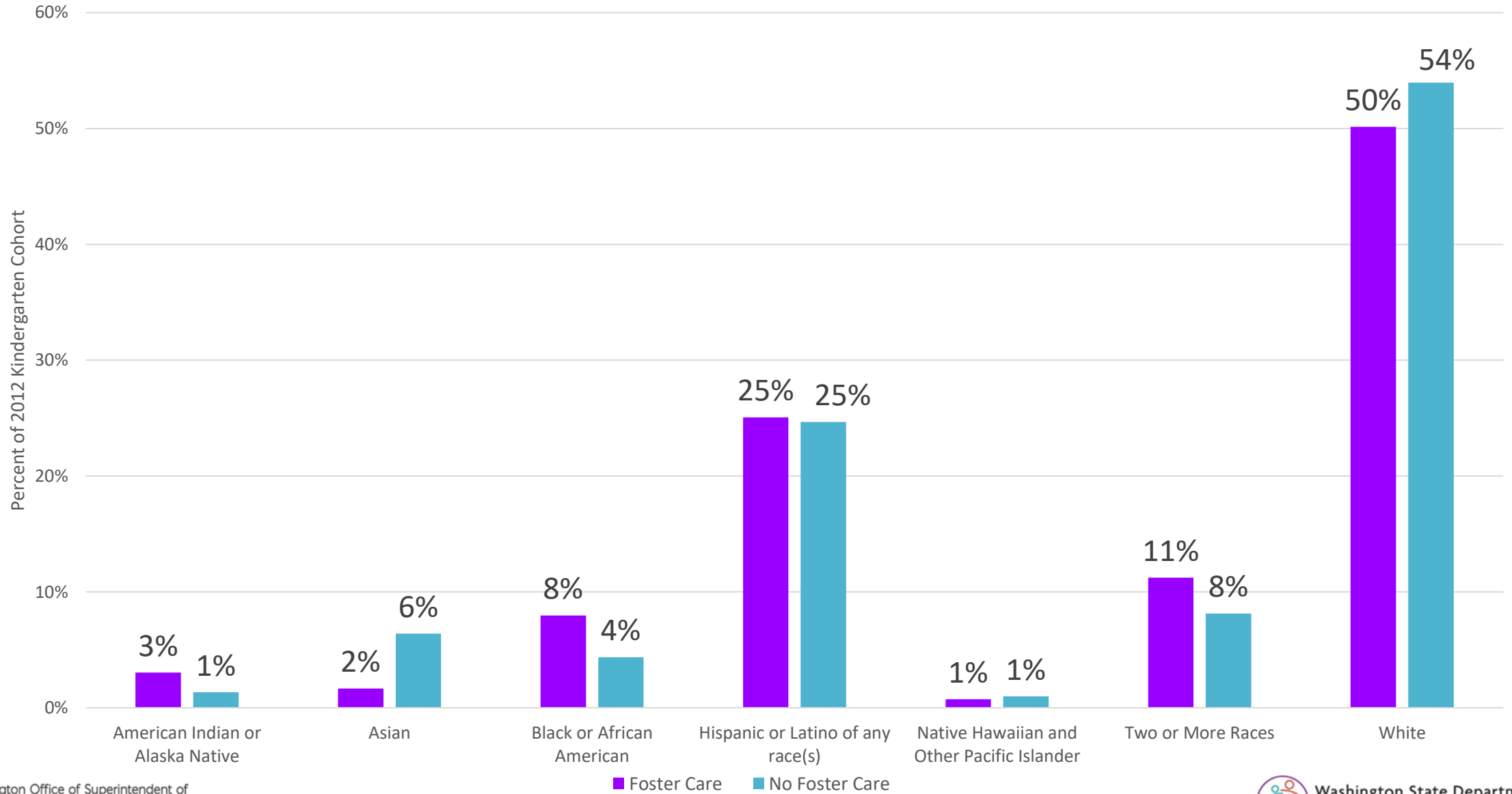- Emergency Shelter
- Pre-adoptive Home
- Trial-return-home

*Including Tribal Child Welfare and Unaccompanied Refugee Minors
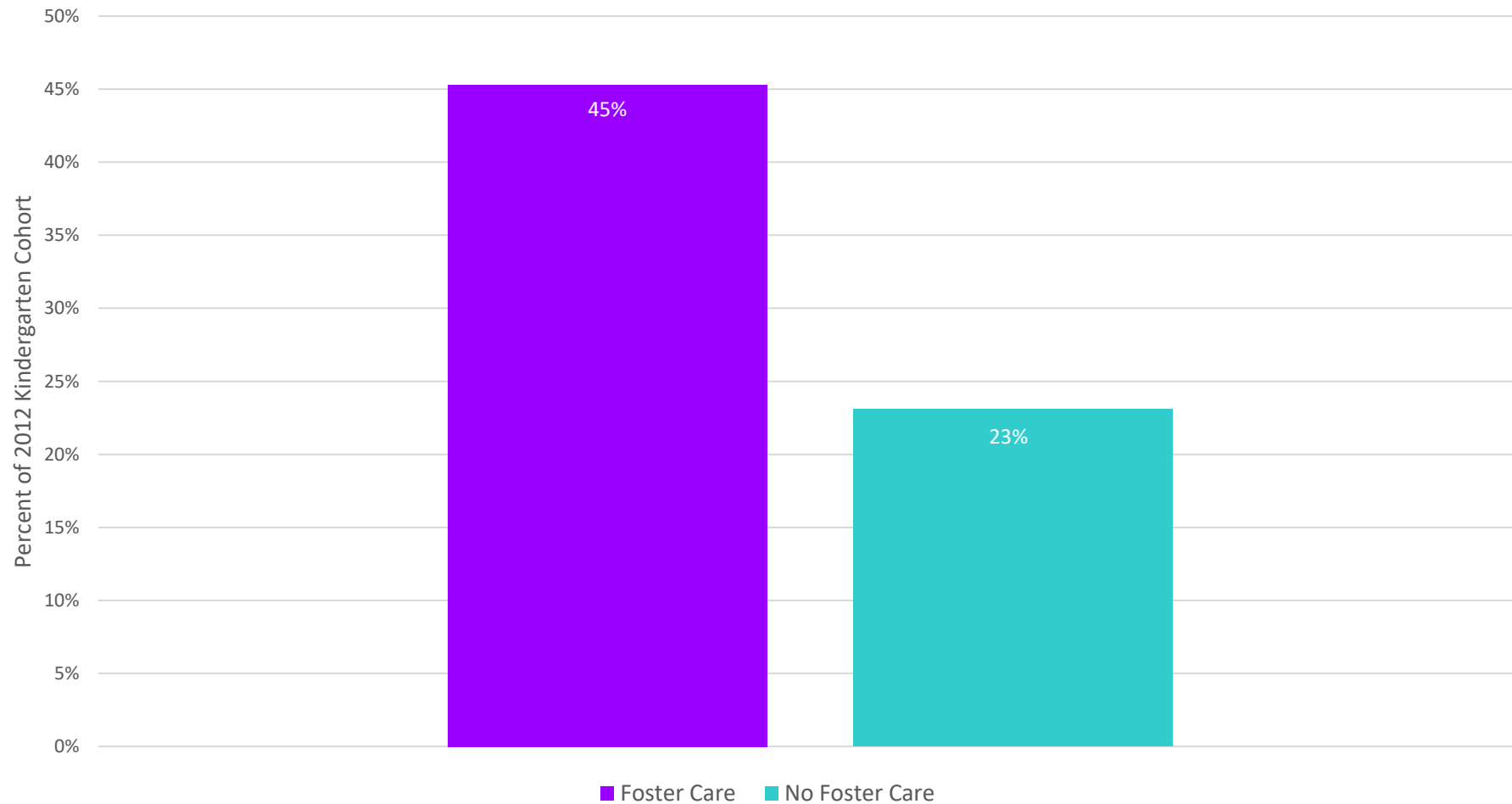
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Number of Students in DCYF Foster Care
2021-22 School Year

RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITIES OF STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE COMPARED TO PEERS

Bar chart showing percent of 2012 Kindergarten Cohort by racial/ethnic identity, comparing Foster Care and No Foster Care groups.

Racial/Ethnic Identity	Foster Care	No Foster Care
American Indian or Alaska Native	3%	1%
Asian	2%	6%
Black or African American	8%	4%
Hispanic or Latino of any race(s)	25%	25%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1%	1%
Two or More Races	11%	8%
White	50%	54%

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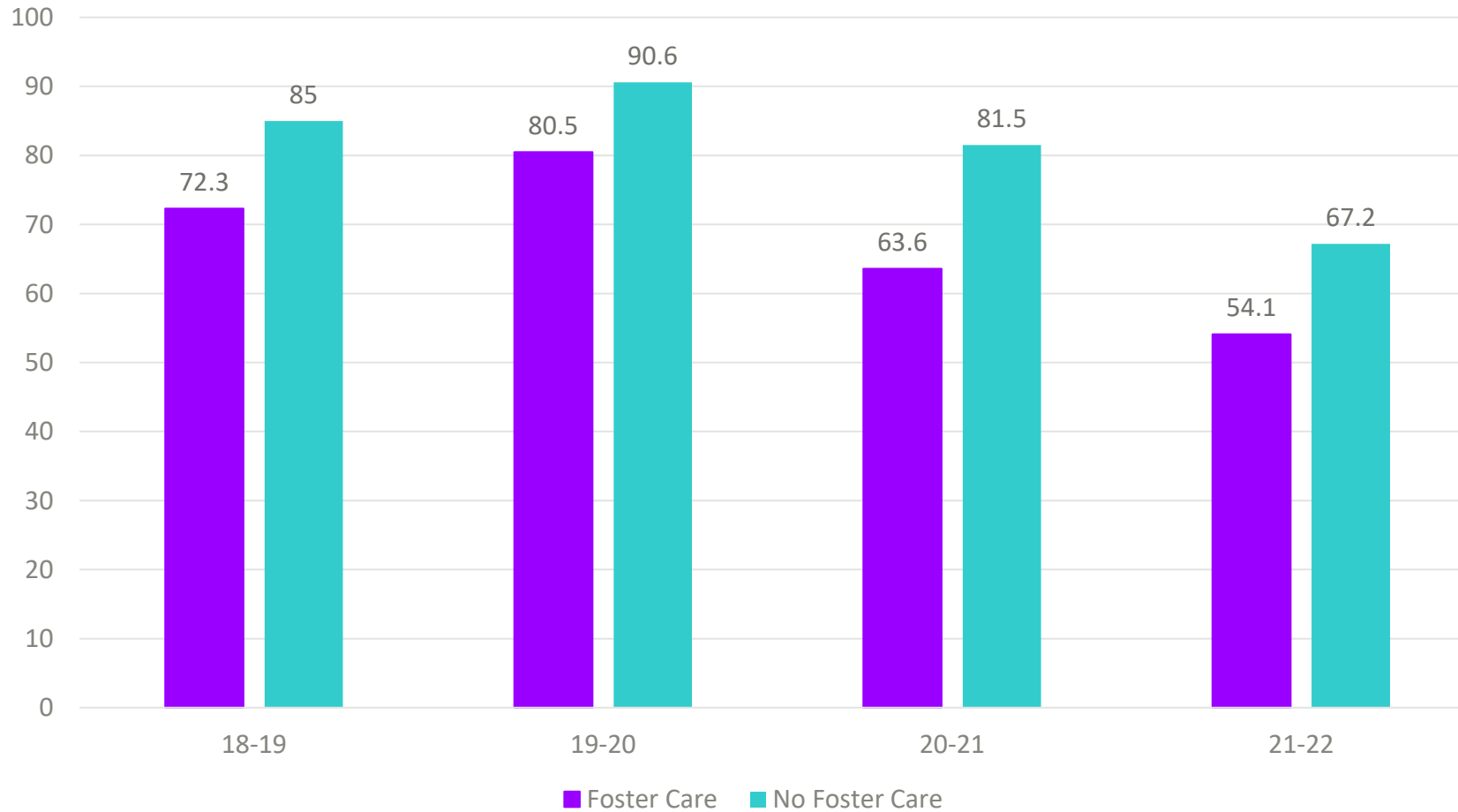Washington State Department of
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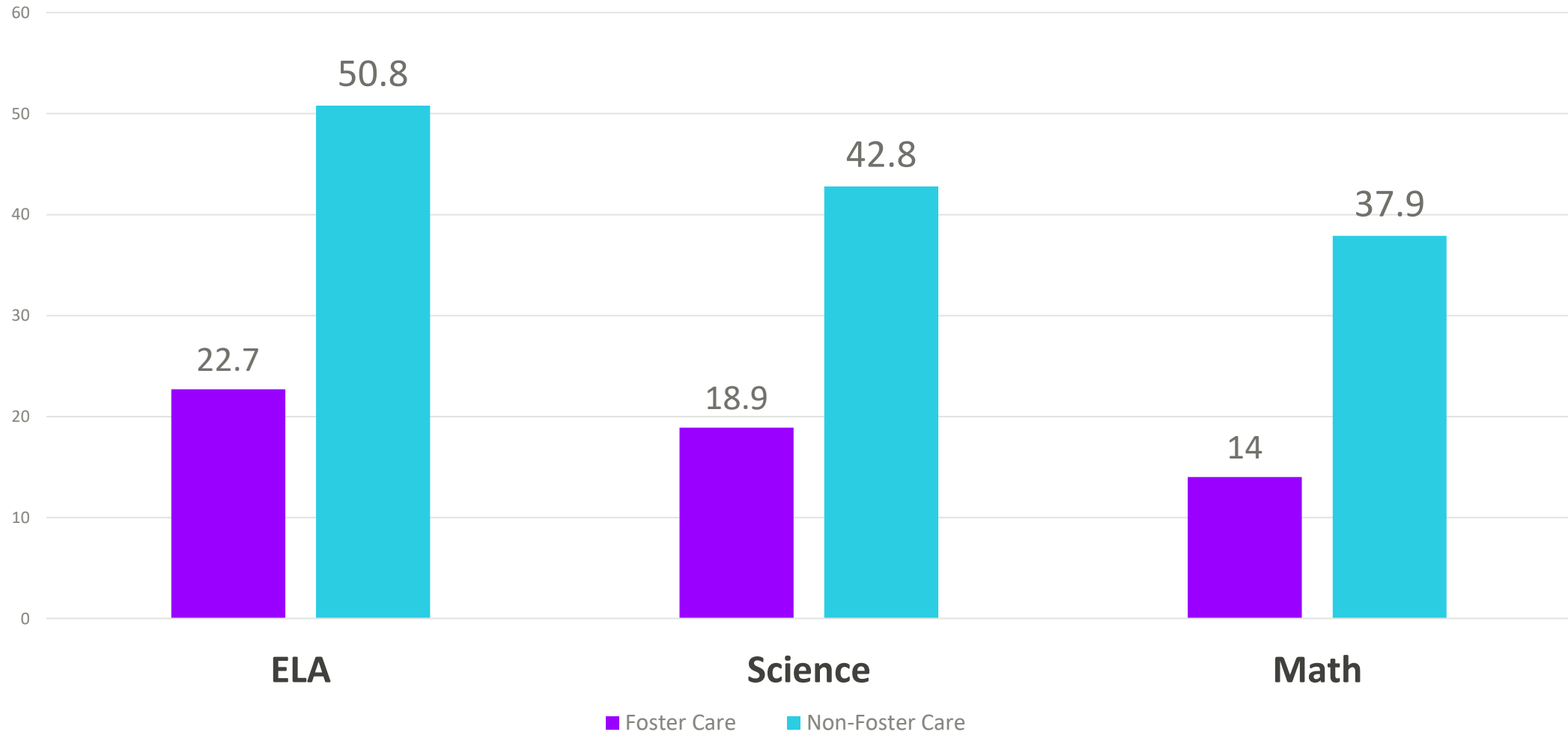**DISABILITY STATUS OF STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE COMPARED TO PEERS**

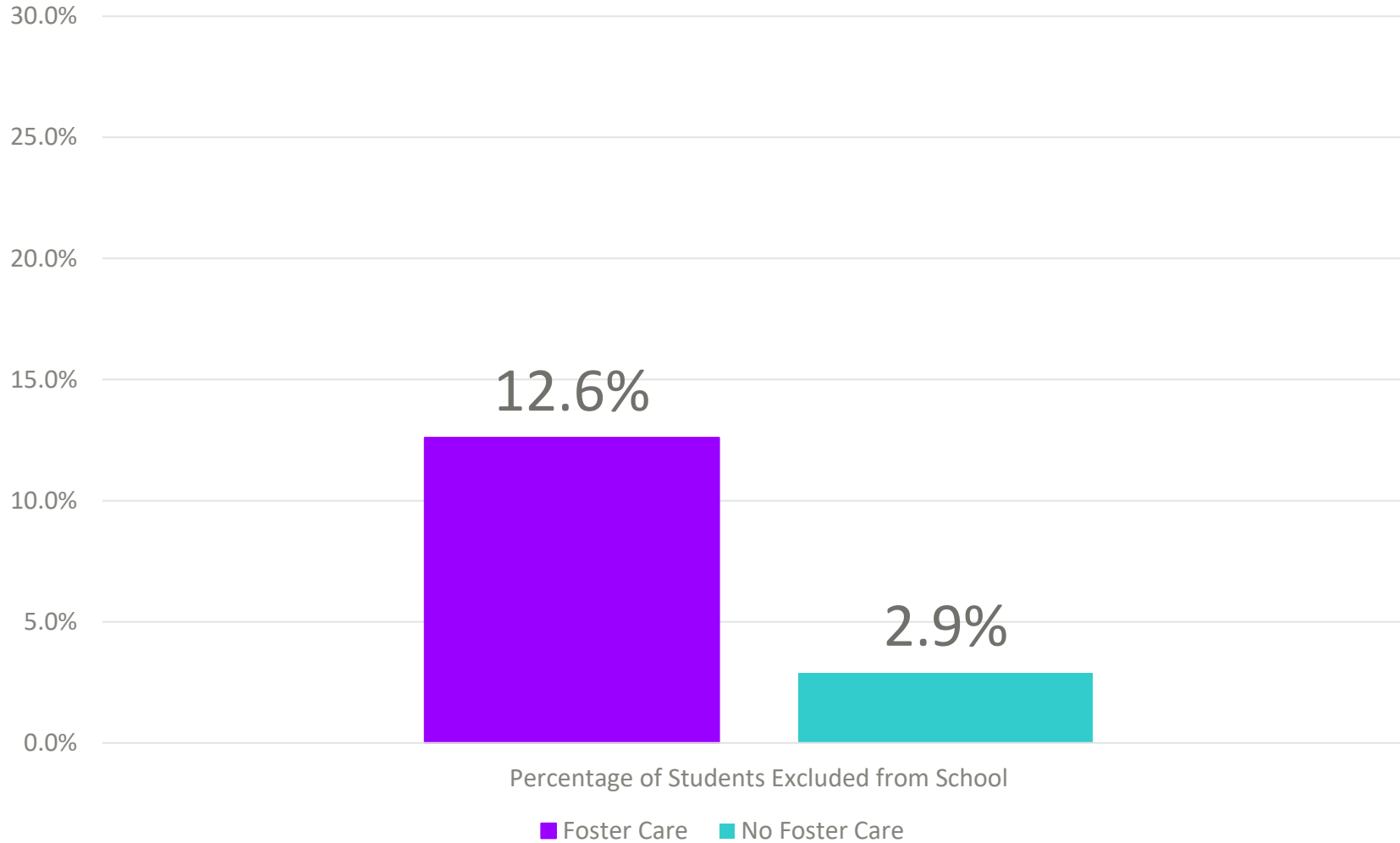Data source: ERDC P20 Data System, 2012 Kindergarten Cohort

Regular Attendance

Percentage of Students with Fewer than 2 Absences per Month

Assessments 2021-2022

ELA: Foster Care 22.7, Non-Foster Care 50.8
Science: Foster Care 18.9, Non-Foster Care 42.8
Math: Foster Care 14, Non-Foster Care 37.9

■ Foster Care   ■ Non-Foster Care

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Discipline
Percentage of Students Excluded through Suspension/Expulsion 2021-22

Race/Ethnicity	Foster Care	No Foster Care
American Indian or Alaska Native	9.5%	5.2%
Asian	6.3%	0.7%
Black/African American	15.4%	5.8%
Hispanic/Latino	11.4%	3.6%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	7.5%	5.0%
Two or More Races	14.7%	3.8%
White	12.4%	2.4%
All Students	12.6%	2.9%

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4 Year Graduation Rates
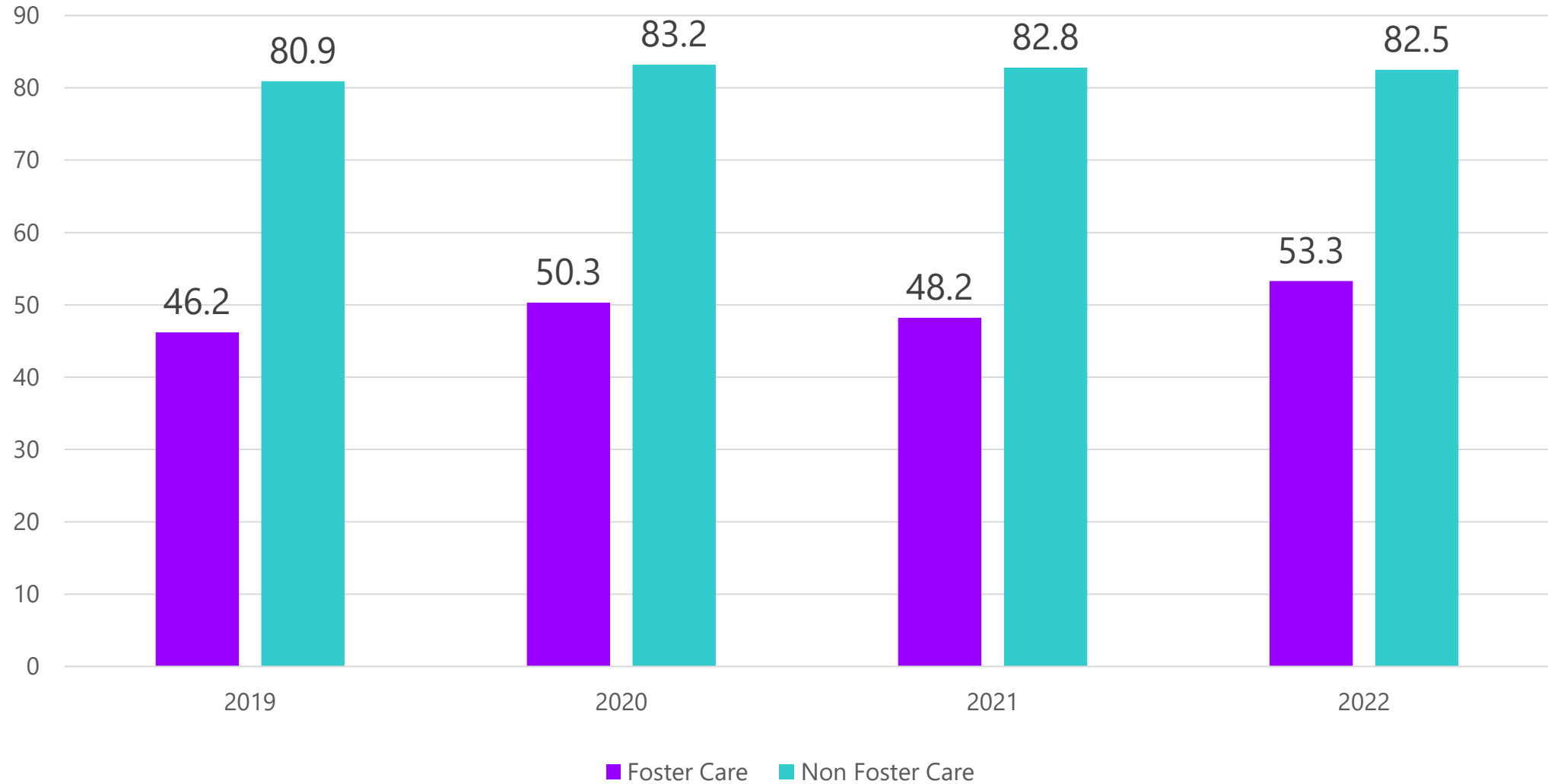
Impact of School Changes

Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay

Research shows that every time a student changes schools, they **lose between 4-6 months of academic progress**. They quickly fall behind their peers.

A positive, stable school experience provides **structure and nurtures an environment where students can learn and grow**.

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Impact of School Changes Cont.

Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay

With **fewer school disruptions**, youth:

- ✓ are provided with a *familiar setting for learning*
- ✓ *remain connected* to school peers and supports
- ✓ are more likely to *access appropriate coursework* and remain on a path to achieve college and career readiness
- ✓ have *educators and school staff who know* their strengths and where they may need a little extra help

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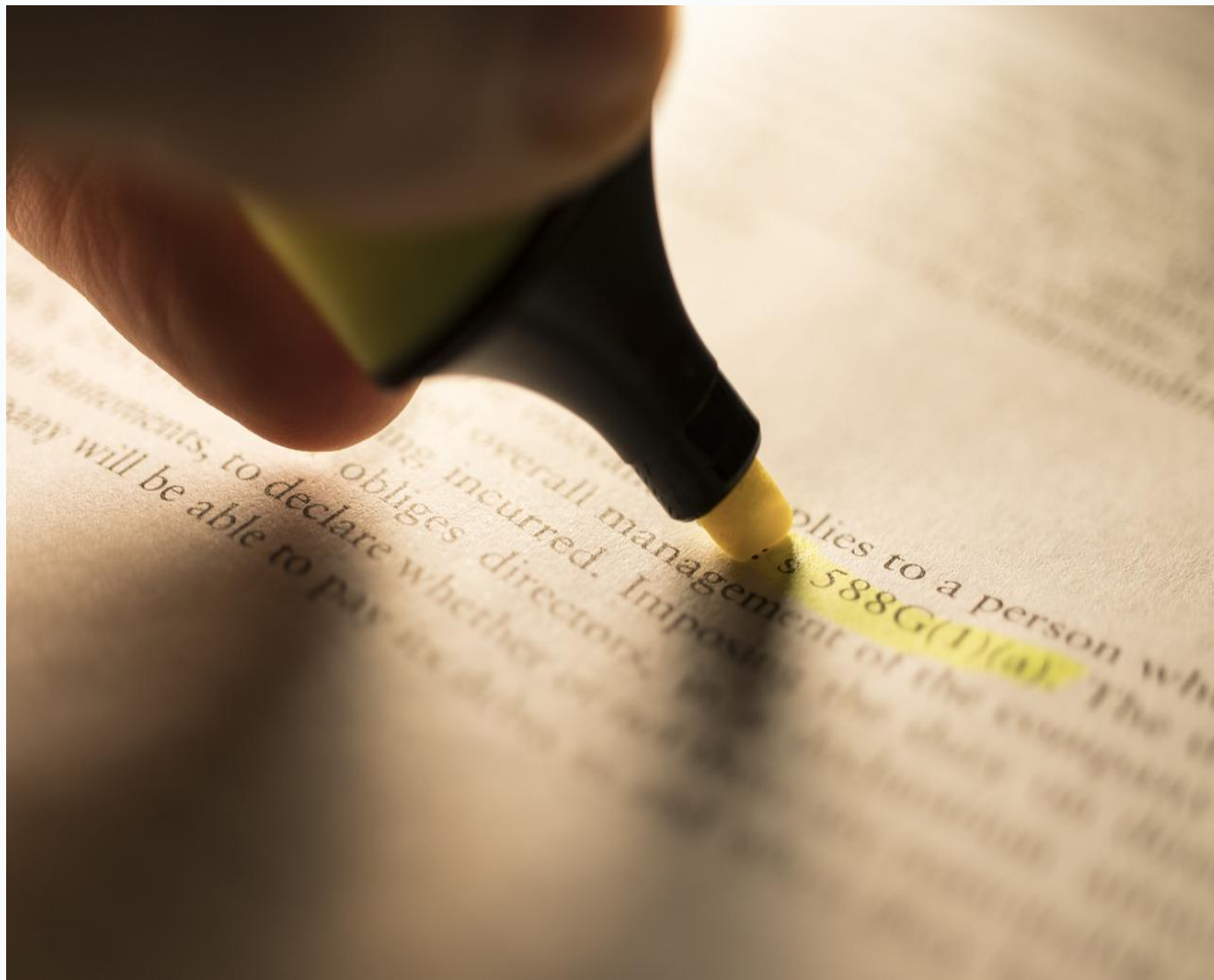
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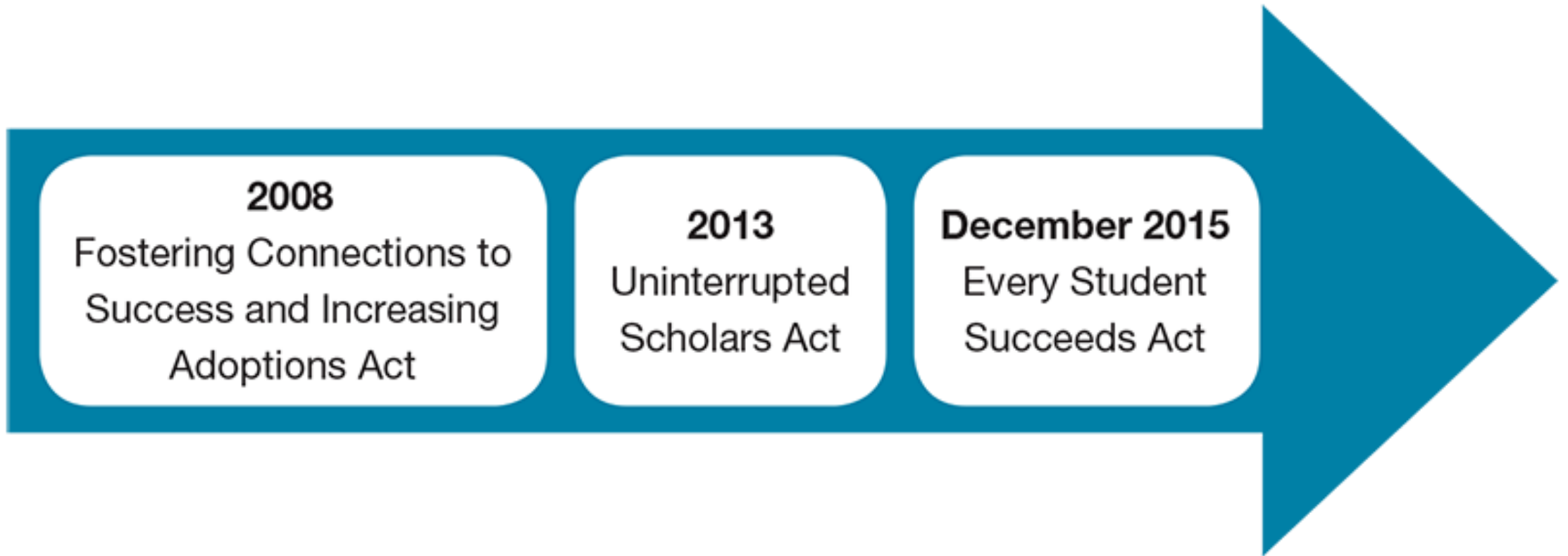

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Legislative Milestones for Educational Stability of Students in Foster Care

Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (2008)

- The child's case plan must ensure **educational stability** while the child is in foster care and include:
  - Placement takes the education setting into consideration; and
  - Child welfare coordinates with the school district to:
    - Ensure the child remains in his or her school of origin; or
    - Immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school, with records transferred, if remaining in the school of origin is not in the child's best interest.

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Uninterrupted Scholars Act - 2013

Educational agencies and institutions are permitted to **disclose personally identifiable information (PII) from the education records of students in foster care placement**, without parental consent, **to an agency caseworker or other representative of a State or local child welfare agency (CWA) or tribal organization authorized to access a student's case plan "when such agency or organization is legally responsible, in accordance with State or tribal law, for the care and protection of the student."**

Data Sharing for Student Support

Child welfare agencies need access to school records.

Caretakers/parents need access to school records.

Schools need to know which students are in foster care and have living placement changes.

Schools must exchange education records when a student in foster care changes schools.

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Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - 2015

This is federal education law.

All schools must follow these provisions.

Washington State has codified these all into state law as well.

Every school district is required to designate a Foster Care Liaison.

Students remain in school of origin unless there is a determination that it is not in their best interest.

Students in foster care are entitled to immediate enrollment, even without documents normally required.

Schools/OSPI must collaborate with Child Welfare Agencies.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - 2015

Every school district is required to designate a Foster Care Liaison.

Foster Care Liaison and Building Points of Contact

RCW 28A.320.148

Every school must have a building point of contact appointed by the principal and liaison.

- Responsible for coordinating services and resources for students in foster care.

Each school district must designate a foster care liaison responsible for:

- Training building point of contact.
- Facilitating district compliance with state and federal laws related to students in out-of-home care.
- Collaborating with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to address educational barriers.

OSPI responsible for:

- Providing best practices for choosing and training building points of contact to each school district.
- Best Practices for Foster Care Building Points of Contact

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Foster Care Building Points of Contact – Washington State Law

Each school is required to designate a foster care building point of contact who knows which students are in foster care and what rights those students have under the law.

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Enter your search terms

Home   Student Success   Certification   Educator Support   Policy & Funding   Data & Reporting

About OSPI

Home » Student Success » Access & Opportunity in Education » Foster Care » Foster Care Liaisons/DCYF Contacts/School Contacts

Foster Care Liaisons/DCYF Contacts/School Contacts

STUDENT SUCCESS

Resources by Subject Area ▸

Learning Standards & Instructional Materials ▸

Graduation ▾

Graduation Requirements ▸

Waivers and CIA

Career Guidance

Use one of the functions below to search for your Foster Care Liaison/Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) contact.

- **By District** - Use the searchable table below to find basic contact information for your district.
- **Regional Contacts** - Find contact information for your accompanying DCYF regional staff member.
- **State Contact** - Find contact information for statewide contacts.
- **By School (XLSX)** - Find school building points of contact. If the information in the spreadsheet needs to be updated, please submit an Update Foster Care Building Points of Contact request. Allow two weeks for submitted updates to be reflected on this spreadsheet.

How do I find a Foster Care Liaison?

How do I find a Building Point of Contact?

[Visit the OSPI Foster Care Education Website](#)

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Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - 2015

Students remain in school of origin unless there is a determination that it is NOT in their best interest.

School of Origin

School in which child is enrolled at time of placement change

Child must remain in school of origin until a determination is made

Includes LEA preschool and designated feeder schools

Moving Students & Best Interest Determinations

RCW 28A.225.350

- Best interest determination meetings **should be made as quickly as possible** in order to prevent educational discontinuity for the student

- Every effort should be made to **gather meaningful input** from relevant and appropriate persons

- Student-centered factors must be used to determine what is in a student's best interest
  - *Age*
  - *Length of placement*
  - *Special needs*
  - *Timing in school year*
  - *Grade level*
  - *Existing connection*

- **The student must remain in his or her school of origin** while a best interest determination is made

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Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - 2015

Students in foster care are entitled to **immediate enrollment**, even without documents normally required.

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Immediate Enrollment

Immediate enrollment means that a child should be enrolled in, and attending, a new school as soon as possible.

- Appropriate classroom placement
- Transportation, if required

Enrollment must not be denied or delayed because documents normally required for enrollment have not been provided

- Including Medical Records such as immunization or health plans

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - 2015

Schools/OSPI must collaborate with Child Welfare Agencies.

Department of Children, Youth, and Families Regional Structure

WASHINGTON STATE
Department of
Children, Youth, and Families

Region 3

WHATCOM county

SKAGIT county

SAN JUAN county

ISLAND

OKANOGAN county

FERRY county

PEND OREILLE county

STEVENS county

CLALLAM county

JEFFERSON county

SNOHOMISH county

CHELAN county

DOUGLAS county

LINCOLN county

SPOKANE county

Region 4

KITSAP county

KING county

Region 1

Region 5

MASON county

GRANT county

ADAMS county

WHITMAN county

GRAYS HARBOR county

THURSTON county

PIERCE county

KITTITAS county

YAKIMA county

PACIFIC county

Region 6

LEWIS county

FRANKLIN county

GARFIELD county

WAHKIAKUM county

Region 2

COLUMBIA county

WALLA WALLA county

ASOTIN county

COWLITZ county

SKAMANIA county

BENTON county

CLARK county

KLICKITAT county

Region 1   Region 3   Region 5
Region 2   Region 4   Region 6

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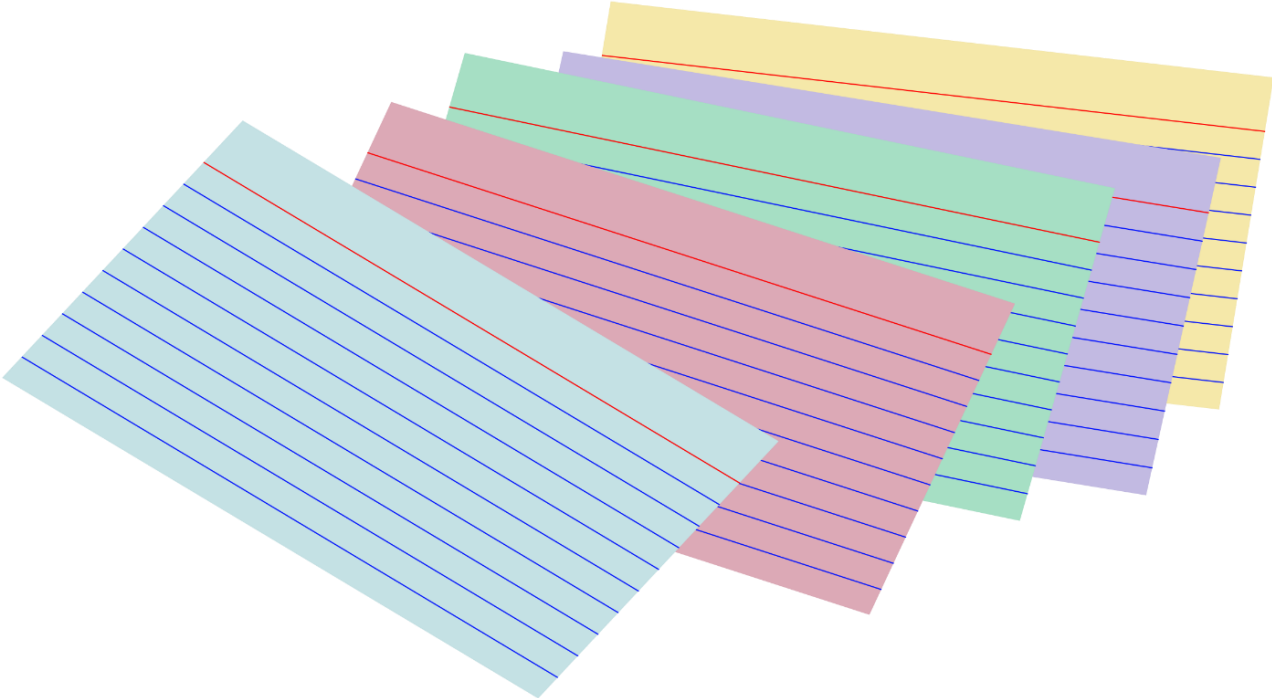**Region 5**

Dawn Flammang
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Region 6

Amanda Huber
Amanda.huber@dcyf.wa.gov

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Have a Break

Activity - Notecards Out!

Framework of Support

DCYF Headquarters Education Team

- K-12 Education
- Education & Training Voucher Program (ETV)

DCYF Regional Education Leads

School Districts

- OSPI Foster Care Education Program
- District Foster Care Liaison
- Foster Care Building Point of Contact

Treehouse

- Educational Advocacy
- Graduation Success
- Tribal Engagement Program

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Working with School Districts

❖ Maintain Confidentiality
❖ Build Relationships
❖ Building Point of Contacts
❖ Foster Care Liaisons

Foster Care Liaison Duties

Make sure every school has a Building Point of Contact and coordinate with them

Serve as the primary contact person for child welfare and case workers

Attend training and professional development opportunities to improve district implementation efforts

Facilitate the transfer of records and immediate enrollment

Facilitate data sharing with child welfare agencies, consistent with FERPA

Develop and coordinate local transportation procedures

Manage best-interest determinations and transportation cost disputes

Ensure that children in foster care are enrolled in, and regularly attending school

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Building Point Of Contact Duties

- Request a list of students in foster care in your building from your Foster Care Liaison

- Obtain a copy of the DCYF School Notification Form from the Foster Care Liaison (an example of the form can be found [here](#)).

- Check with nutrition services to make sure the student is receiving free meals (no application needed)

- Fees and Fines – work with DCYF caseworker to have any outstanding fees and fines of the student paid

- Connect with student and build relationship

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Who is Responsible for Educational Decisions?

DCYF
- DCYF is authorized to make educational* decisions w/o parent approval
- *May NOT be special education decision maker

Caregiver
- Caregiver or foster parent makes day-to-day educational decisions
- Can serve as the "parent" regarding special education decisions

Parent
- Unless limited by the court, parents retain rights to access records directly from the school and to make educational decisions

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Who Can Serve as "Parent" Regarding Special Education Decisions?

- Biological or adoptive parent

- Caregiver or foster parent

- Person acting in place of parent and with whom student lives

- Surrogate parent appointed by the court

- Adult students whose rights have transferred to themselves

Federal law prohibits a DCYF caseworker from being the special education decision maker for a student in foster care.

If the court has not restricted their access, birth parents are considered "parent" before a foster parent. School should consult with caseworker for more information.

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Grad Success – Work directly with youth to help them graduate from high school with a plan for the future.

Ed Advocacy – Work with social workers, caregivers, and schools to resolve difficult issues at school and to remove barriers to kids' school success.

Treehouse Essentials and Experiences

Treehouse Store #1

Ensures that youth in foster care have access to the items they need to feel confident and ready to learn. Youth and their caregivers can shop free new/like-new clothing, school supplies, books, toys and other essentials so they feel good and fit in.

Just-In-Time-Funding #2

Pays for the important childhood experiences that every child deserves. Provides access to extracurricular activities so youth gain confidence, have fun and improve academic performance. Pays for fun and enriching summer experiences for our youth.
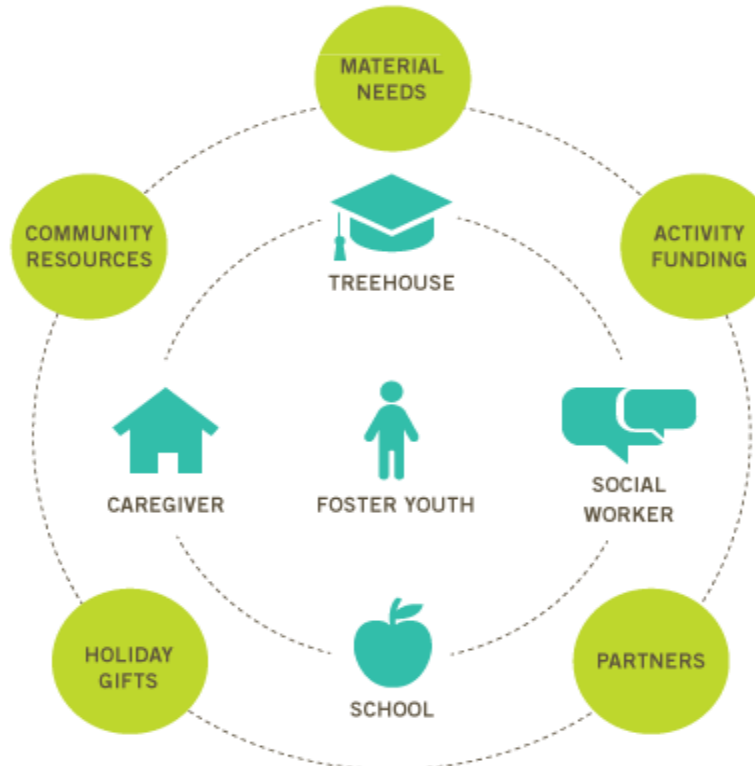
Driver's Assistance #3

Provides funding and assistance for youth in foster care to obtain: Washington State ID Cards, Driver's Education Courses, Washington State Learner's Permits, Washington State Driver's License & Enhanced Driver's Licenses, and Automobile Insurance.

Holiday Magic #4

Makes the holidays brighter for children and youth in foster care by providing each one a meaningful holiday gift. The program is made possible through a 30-year partnership with Washington state's Department of Children Youth and Families.

MATERIAL NEEDS

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

ACTIVITY FUNDING

TREEHOUSE

CAREGIVER

FOSTER YOUTH

SOCIAL WORKER

HOLIDAY GIFTS

SCHOOL

PARTNERS

treehouse

Washington State Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds

- **Informal Conflict Resolution**
- **Information**
- **Referrals**
- **Toolkits**
- **Other Resources**

www.oeo.wa.gov

to tackle opportunity gaps and make the system better.

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Thank You

Graphic by Prawny

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A note about educational outcomes for students in foster care…

OSPI and DCYF have established a data exchange which allows us to identify all students who are in out-of-home care under the authority of DCYF. This information is used to identify foster care students for purposes of reporting and service delivery. For reporting, we use the rule that if a student is ever in out-of-home care within the school year, they are designated as foster care for the entire school year for the purpose of reporting. The one exception to this is graduation rate, which looks at a student's foster care status across 9th through 12th grades and designates them as foster care if they were ever in foster care in grades 9-12.